



The Living Well Lab: Assessing the impact of a healing-based/non-profit wellness model on the QOL and rehabilitation of PWAs

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Friends For Life Society (FFL)



Background

- Since 1993 Friends For Life serves as a catalyst to enhance the wellness of individuals living with a life threatening illness by providing complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and support services with no government funding.

Living Well Lab (LWL)

- FFL offers free CAM services by volunteer practitioners to 770 members
- With a growing membership, limited space and time; it needs to expand services/open a satellite clinic
- Obtained a CBR, operational CIHR grant in 2005
- FFL launched the LWL in Dec. 2006
- 207 members enrolled into the LWL

LWL - Objectives

- To explore through a participatory, community based process whether use of FFL's CAM programs and services reduce symptoms, improve health or enhance quality of life for PWAs
- To provide members with a survey tool to track their own wellness journey
- To create an in-house research culture that allows for continual evidence-based evolution of FFL

LWL - Design

- Longitudinal mixed methods approach (surveys, interviews & focus groups)
- Peer researchers consulted & carried out all aspects of research (i.e. creating study documents, designing questions, collecting & analyzing data, dissemination)

LWL - Design

- A series of online/hard copy surveys at baseline, 3-, 6-, 12- & 18-month periods)

Questions pertained to:

- Quality of life (QoL)
 - Personal transformation
 - Social support
 - Satisfaction
 - Experiences with practitioners
 - Symptom management
- 1-1 interviews (n-85 = baseline & 9-month)
 - Focus groups (n-3; 27 members)

LWL – Quantitative Data

- Gender: male 73.4% (n - 152)
female 26.6% (n - 55)
- Complex health issues: 58.6% (n - 121)
have 3 or more health issues
HIV/AIDS – 63.8% (n - 132)
Depression – 49.8% (n - 103)
Pain – 37.1% (n - 77)

LWL – Quantitative Data

- 92.8% (n - 192) participants noticed major changes (less pain & stress, more energy)
- 89% (n - 171) attributed change to CAM
- 92% (n - 177) reported improved QoL (i.e. decreased anxiety, feeling more confident about one's health, enhanced social network)

LWL – Qualitative Data

- Relationships with Conventional Health Care Providers:
 - * about 50% participants do not talk with their conventional health care provider about their CAM use
 - * about 50% do talk with health care provider – with reservations
 - * some feel frustrated (e.g. educate them) or provider never asks about CAM use
 - * some use conventional medicine for medical wellness, CAM for overall health & well being
- LWL participants report being: more able to cope with life; understand their illness(es); keep healthy

Why Do LWL Members go to FFL

- Relaxation
- Nutrition & Social Support
- Pain relief

From CBR to Practice

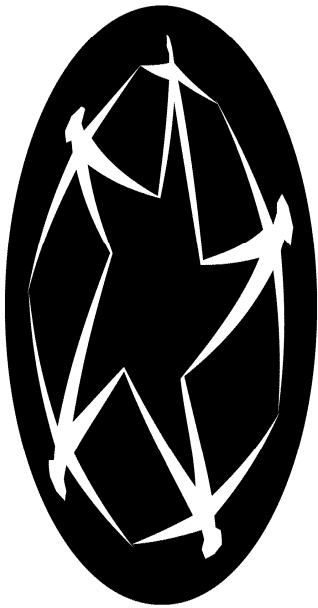
- Non-profit wellness centres do not have the resources to statistically evaluate their services
- With the LWL data, FFL can now:
 - * clearly identify its 'strengths' and make changes
 - * identify any gaps in meeting members' needs
 - * study the feasibility of creating new programs/services and/or community partnerships, and opening a new clinic
 - * strategically plan for the future

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Questions?



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